

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Protecting a membrane and electrode assembly in an electrochemical cell having one or more electrocatalysts in intimate contact with the membrane during storage or shipment of the cell. The membrane may be provided in either the non-proton form of a dry or hydrated cation exchange membrane, such as an alkali metal cation form or an ammonium cation form; the wet or dry precursor form of a cation exchange membrane, such as the non-ionically conducting sulfonyl-fluoride polymer membrane; or the dry proton form of a cation exchange membrane. These membrane surfaces are not acidic under open circuit conditions experienced during storage or shipment of the cell. Since some electrocatalysts are degraded during contact with the acidic surface of a hydrated membrane, the non-acidic surface of the membrane protects these electrocatalysts. The method may be used on newly assembled electrochemical cells, on cells being taken out of service, and on membrane and electrode assemblies.